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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 9424  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 5262  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 1376  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 2604  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
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RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000324

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [TH](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER DISPUTE: JOINT BORDER  
COMMISSION TALKS FRIENDLY BUT INCONCLUSIVE

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James F. Entwistle, reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. The Thai and Cambodian Joint Border Commission met February 3-4 in Bangkok for friendly talks but was unable to make substantive progress in resolving their border dispute. The two sides could not agree on the official name for the temple at the heart of the border dispute and for a bilateral monitoring group proposed for the area around the ancient temple. The name of the bilateral monitoring mechanism looks to be a significant issue, since the Thai government appears to want to maintain as much control as possible of any international coordinating committee for preservation of the temple. Minor agreements were struck in scheduling the next round of talks and in regard to technical details for demarcating the border. Thai and Cambodian defense ministers met February 6 in Phnom Penh; Thai contacts suggested before the meeting that the issue of troop reductions at the temple would be on the agenda.

12. (C) Comment. Despite a lack of substantive progress in the talks, we are reassured that Thailand and Cambodia continue to meet to talk about the border dispute, seemingly in a friendly atmosphere. Moreover, the two sides appear committed to resolving the border dispute through diplomatic, peaceful means and seem to recognize that further clashes would do both sides no good. In the negotiations, the Thai government appears to be trying to win concessions on peripheral issues such as those concerning the international coordinating committee, the composition of officials in the area of the temple, or references to the temple itself in multiple languages. End Summary and comment.

THAI-CAMBODIAN TALKS MAKE PROGRESS  
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13. (SBU) Thai and Cambodian negotiators made little progress in resolving the two nations' border dispute centered on areas the Preah Vihear temple during February 3-4 Joint Border Commission (JBC) meetings in Bangkok, according to Thai officials and media reports. For example, the two sides could not agree on what name to use for the temple in official documents. Limited by Thai parliamentary approval of negotiating guidelines, Thai officials proposed using both the Thai (Phra Viharn) and Khmer name (Preah Vihear) in

references to the temple, while Cambodia insisted on using Preah Vihear alone. The two sides were similarly unable to agree on a name for a surveillance group that would be stationed in the area around the ancient temple. Thailand reportedly proposed calling the mechanism "The Military Monitoring Group" while Cambodia proposed "The Temporary Coordinating Team."

14. (U) Despite the lack of agreement on names, the atmosphere of the talks appeared friendly, and media reports indicated that the next JBC talks have been scheduled for the second week of April in Cambodia. In addition, the negotiators agreed in principle to initiate a joint survey to demarcate a border area along Thailand's Si Sa Ket province and to allow a joint working group to begin studying the legal technicalities of demarcating the greater Thai-Cambodian border.

#### COORDINATING COMMITTEE A STICKING POINT

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15. (U) The listing of the Preah Vihear as a World Heritage site in July 2008 prompted UNESCO to call for Cambodia to convene an international coordinating committee (ICC) to safeguard the temple. UNESCO recommended that Cambodia invite Thailand and not more than seven other "appropriate" partners as members of the committee. The recommendation to convene an ICC has prompted expressions of alarm by some Thai commentators. Shortly after the inscription decision, former Thai Finance Minister Pridiyathorn Devakula claimed in the Bangkok Post that establishing an ICC could affect areas

BANGKOK 00000324 002 OF 002

surrounding the temple in which Thailand and Cambodia have made overlapping claims. Furthermore, the composition of the ICC is sensitive issue for the Thai. In the same article, Pridiyathorn cautioned that Cambodia could select committee members that would be opposed to Thai interests. Cambodia has not yet established the committee, and UNESCO late last year extended the deadline from February 1 to May 1, 2009.

16. (C) MFA Director of EAP Division II Kallayana Vipattipumiprates attended the JBC talks and told us February 6 that the dispute over the name of the monitoring group of the area around the temple centered on an attempt by Cambodia to push for the withdrawal of all Thai troops from the disputed areas around the temple. Cambodia proposed replacing troops with civil servants or other civilian officials, but the RTG had insisted on keeping the troops to supervise and monitor the area around the temple and to facilitate the work of the ICC, Kallayana said.

#### MILITARY LEADERS MEET IN CAMBODIA

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17. (U) Thai Minister of Defense GEN (ret.) Prawit Wongsuwan February 6 visited Phnom Penh along with the Thai Permanent Secretary for Defense, the Royal Thai Armed Forces Chief of Defense Forces, and the Commanders of the Thai Army, Navy, and Air Force. The Thai military delegation, unusually inclusive of all top Thai military leaders traveling abroad together, was scheduled to meet with Cambodian Minister of Defense Tea Banh, among others. According to media reports, the two sides planned to discuss troop reductions along the border. Prawit, in remarks prior to departure, downplayed the visit and said the focus was for the two sides to get better acquainted.

JOHN